

WHEN TO CITE

Sometimes it doesn't seem clear whether you should cite something or not in your paper. We'll see when you need to and when you don't.

Writing a paper is like participating in a scholarly conversation on your topic. The purpose of citing is to acknowledge and give credit to what others have said already, and to distinguish that from what you are contributing.

Any time you use or quote someone else's words, you need to cite. Make sure every direct quotation has quotation marks around it so people know you're quoting.

But you also need to cite if you use someone's ideas, even if you don't use their words. If you summarize or paraphrase someone's ideas in your own words, you need to cite so you don't imply those ideas as your own.

If you're using statistics or data compiled by someone else, like Statistics Canada, you also need to cite to acknowledge the work someone did to compile it.

If you use an image you download from the web, you need to cite it too. If you don't, you're claiming you created it yourself.

So what don't you need to cite?

If something is common knowledge, you don't need to cite it. Common knowledge can be a bit tricky if you're new to a subject and don't know what everyone knows, so if you aren't sure then cite.

You don't need to cite your own original work, thoughts or ideas. If your thoughts are influenced by things you read though, make sure you cite the sources that influenced you. Be clear about what you got from others, and what is your own thinking, analysis, or interpretation.

If you don't cite when you need to, you're claiming the work of others as your own, which is plagiarism. So if you're not sure, you should always cite.

Check out our other resources on [how to cite in various styles](#).

If you have any questions, ask us at library.wlu.ca/help/askus.